M SELF AND I

FANNIE STEARNS DAVIS

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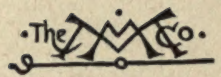
MYSELF AND I



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MYSELF AND I

BY

FANNIE STEARNS DAVIS

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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TO

My Father and Mother

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A JOY FROM LITTLE THINGS

To press a joy from little things, —
  From feet that fall in time,
From daylong silent fashionings
  Of some heart-hidden rhyme, —

From shapes of leaves and clouds and snow,
  From others' brighter eyes,
From thinking, "I am dull, I know,
  But some are glad and wise," —

From love remembered, though too dim
  For laughter or for tears,
One fragile flame, too pale and slim
  To gleam on grayer years, —

That is one way of Joy, I know,
  Yet I desire, desire,
To go the way a god might go
  Through Love and Life and Fire!

MYSELF AND I

Myself and I went wandering to-day.
We walked the long white webbèd roads away,
Saw much green marsh-land, much blue splendid
sea.
The wind was happy with Myself and me.

Now we had read a book whose burden blew
With a brave honest air of being true.
It said, "Express Thyself, Thyself alway.
True to Thyself, thou canst not go astray.
Ask of the inner Voice, the inner Light,
And heaven-clear shall be thine outer sight.
Obey, — and thou shalt always seek and find
God in the clay, the Spirit on the wind."

So said I, "To Myself I will be true.
Speak on, Myself, what I to-day shall do."
Myself, thereat rejoicing, crowed aloud.
We were elate as angels on a cloud!

The day was ours. Myself with merry mien
Said, "Thou shalt wear thy gown of shoal-sea green:
Thy curious gown, and plaited in thy hair
Grasses and glistering sea-weeds dank and rare.
To-day thou shalt a mermaid-creature be,
And skip along the surges of the sea."

Then I must labor with Myself. "Indeed
I love the green gown and the wreathèd weed.
But every one would turn and stare at me
As I ran down the marshes to the sea!
And if beside the surf alone I go,
What strange bad folk may meet me there? Dost know? —
O, dear Myself, such joys we cannot take,
Or every tongue will wag and head will shake!"

Myself, demurring, yet did give consent.
Discreetly garbed, on sober roads we went.

The wind came up from out the gleaming west,
And shook the poplar trees, and downward pressed
The bright gray-headed grasses, and the bay
Bristled its blue hair like a hound. Straightway

Myself, long throbbing in my throat, cried out,
"Run with the wind! oh, race with him and shout!
Sing to the sun! be merry as the grass!
Now all the gladness of the earth doth pass.
Thou wouldst not be my wild green mermaid-thing,
But oh, I prithee, laugh, and run, and sing!"

Then must I labor with Myself. "But lo,
Along the road much people pass us. No. —
If I should sing and run, to-morrow we
In durance with the Crazy Folk might be,
Wouldst thou, strait-jacketted, be fain to sing?
O, dear Myself, ask not so mad a thing!"

Upon a porch with scarlet vines o'errun
A darling baby tottered to the sun.
With little cooing cries he greeted us.
"See!" said Myself, "He is more glorious
Than all the sun. Go up and kiss him, thou.
He is more sweet than bloom on any bough."

Then must I labor with Myself. "But stay!
His mother by the lattice hid away
Doth watch him. She will hate me if I dare
To touch him. Look, already doth she stare

Because we loiter by the little wall.
Myself, that was the maddest thing of all."

Myself made outcry. "Shame! thou hast not done
Of all the things I bid a single one.
If to Thyself thou art not ever true,
How shall the eyes of God come piercing through
This maskèd world?"
I had no answer pat.
Myself had caught me, I admitted that: —
And to atone, I swore by wind and sky
To do Myself's next bidding, should I die!

Myself triumphant, I not too content,
Down divers white and sunny ways we went.

All suddenly across the curving road
A youth as tall as plumy Hector strode;
As tall, as brave in fashion. Faith, he seemed
A hero-shape some epic minstrel dreamed!
With proud high step and level sea-blue eyes,
He looked a god on gallant enterprise.

Up leapt Myself. "Oh, make him turn thy way!
Stumble, or swoon! oh, somehow make him stay!

Thy blood and his are kin, thy heart doth beat.
Surely, ah surely, he would find thee sweet!
Let him not pass, he is so brave to see! " —
He passed. I know not if he glanced at me.

Then must I truly labor with Myself.
I said, "O vain, preposterous! Thou elf,
Thou wicked witch, thou monstrous mischief, thou
Consummate little mock at conscience, how
Dost thou expect obedience to such
Unseemly promptings? I have borne too much.
Out on thee (yet I love thee)! Now be still.
God help me if I work thy naughty will."

At eve Myself and I came home. That book
Down from its high and portly place we took,
And read, "Express Thyself, Thyself alway.
True to Thyself, thou canst not go astray."
— I looked Myself between the dancing eyes:
They dazzled me, they were so wild and wise.
"Myself," I said, "art thou a naughtier one
Than any other self beneath the sun?
Or why, why, why, — could I not once obey
Thine innocent glad bidding, all this day?"

Myself's bright eyes were clouded o'er with tears.
Myself's gay voice was dim as dust of years.
"Ah," said Myself, "the book is true. And I
Am very naughty sometimes. See, I cry
Repentance. Yet so mad I needs must be
Or else the world would choke and smother me.
The world must choke me. No more like a faun
The Spirit, running free, takes dusk and dawn
With earth-simplicity. Thou canst not do
These sudden happy things I call thee to. —
And yet, young Puritan, be kind to me!
I am more precious than thy treasury
Of maxims. Yes, deny me often. Go
The sober road. Yet always deep below
Thy silent days, remember, I am here,
Defiant, singing, shadowed not by fear
Of Change or Death. Remember me, although
I am so wild, and wanton with thee so. —
For I, though all the world throw stones at me,
Am Light, am Voice, am God's own Spark in thee!"

We laid the great book back upon its shelf.
Between two tears, I smiled in at Myself.

THE FORBIDDEN LURE

"LEAVE all and follow, follow! "
  Lure of the sun at dawn,
Lure of a wind-paced hollow,
  Lure of the sun withdrawn;
Lure of the brave old singing
  Brave ancient minstrels knew;
Of dreams like sea-fog clinging
  To boughs the night sifts through.

"Leave all and follow, — follow! "
  The sun goes up the day;
Flickering wing of swallow,
  Blossoms that blow away, —
What would you, luring, luring,
  When I must bide at home?
My heart will break her mooring,
  And die in reef-flung foam!

Oh, I must never listen!
  Call not outside my door.
Green leaves, you must not glisten
  Like water any more.

O Beauty, wandering Beauty,
  Pass by; speak not. For see,
By bed and board stands Duty
  To snatch my dreams from me!

THE MOODS

The Moods have laid their hands across my hair:
The Moods have drawn their fingers through my heart:
My hair shall never more lie smooth and bright,
But stir like tide-worn sea-weed, and my heart
Shall never more be glad of small sweet things, —
A wild rose, or a crescent moon, — a book
Of little verses, or a dancing child.
My heart turns crying from the rose and book,
My heart turns crying from the thin bright moon,
And weeps with useless sorrow for the child.
The Moods have loosed a wind to vex my hair,
And made my heart too wise, that was a child.

Now I shall blow like smitten candle-flame:
I shall desire all things that may not be:
The years, the stars, the souls of ancient men,
All tears that must, and smiles that may not be, —
Yes, glimmering lights across a windy ford,

And vagrant voices on a darkened plain,
And holy things, and out-cast things, and things
Far too remote, frail-bodied to be plain.

My pity and my joy are grown alike.
I cannot sweep the strangeness from my heart.
The Moods have laid swift hands across my hair:
The Moods have drawn swift fingers through my heart.

A BALLAD OF RETURN

Behold, I have served you a year and a day,
But now I am fain to be going away. —
I have bent my back to the tasks ye set
And bound my hair in a sober net:
I have knelt in the kirk and tried to pray,
Though my thoughts were wandering far away.
I have given few words to your words, though ye
In God's own sight have been good to me. —
Mistress and master and children all,
I cry a blessing on hearth and hall.
May ye sleep in peace and rise in the sun,
And an angel follow you every one, —
But I, — it's out from your hall I go
Ere ever the morning star dips low.

For my mother was born of the gipsy folk,
A child of the wind and the wandering smoke;
And a braw brown sailor fathered me,
Over across the windy sea.

In a low-browed house by the hollow shore
I dreamed all night to the breakers' roar:
I danced all day on the dunes that lie
Bare to the wind and the driven sky.
Ships and sea-wrack and fog I knew
As a hill knows the sun and a rose the dew.

And when I was grown to a slip of a lass,
With eyes that widened to meet my glass,
'Twas a lither lad from the secret sea
Who drew the heart from the side of me.
He kissed me and gave me a crooked ring,
And bade me to pray for his voyaging.
Up the hill of the terrible sea,
Under the unknown stars sailed he;
But oh, he will come! he will come to me!

My mother sleeps 'neath an ash-tree, high
On a craggy hill where the eagles cry.
My father lies drowned where the bitter seas
Rage at the roots of the Hebrides.

I have lain in a byre and watched the lift
Of the first white dawn when the Two Winds shift,
And the stars go pale, and the cattle stir,
And the sun calls "Wake!" like a trumpeter.

I have hung in a fir-tree's fork, and felt
The lightning stab and the strong hail pelt.
I have sailed all day in the blank-eyed mist
Over bays that the long reefs tear and twist.
And thrice I have heard in the night the cry
Of the Hosts of the Dead go by, go by:
Drifting over the Bar of Dread,
Or riding over the Bridge of the Dead,
Wrapped in fog, with their eyes as bright
As lost ships' lanterns at mid o' night.

I have served you humbly a year and a day,
But now I am fain to be going away. —

Farewell! farewell! for I stand no more
In sunshine or starshine beside your door.
Sea-wrack and wind and the wayside smoke: —
For my mother was born of the gipsy folk.

DAY

THERE is your day.
Up! Away!

The still, untroubled forest stirs.
The doves' nests in the deep black firs
Move and pulse and beat;
Quivers of leaves, like heat,
Run down the birches' boughs;
One steady wind-blade ploughs
A furrow in the lake;
The small wild roses take
Sudden warm blushes; all the sky
Grows into blue. — O Sun, come by!
The forest breathes and waits:
Birds call their mates:
White flowers shake on stems:
Lake ripples gleam like gems:
The morning star is near to die: —
Sun! Come by!

You, sleepy-eyed, leap up; let slip
Warm dreams, and make your lashes drip
With quick cold water. Eat, and pray
Before the sun, and laugh, and say
"God's joy be with my world to-day!"

There is your day.
Up! Away!

THE REBEL

FIND me by the water-side,
  Find me in the wood:
Take me as you find me, quick,
  If you find me good!

Oh, I'm weary of the way
  Up the hill to church.
I should like to be the wind
  In the silver birch:
I should like to be the stream
  Singing to the sea,
Or the shadows of swift wings,
  Woven curiously.
Or a rabbit in the brake,
  Or a speckled trout
In the green-and-gloomy-pool
  Lazing it about.

Why should such as I abide
  Rusting like a blade
In a mildewed scabbard? Oh,
  Wherefore was I made

With such lusty lively feet,
  Such a love of sky,
If I may not run and leap?
  If I may not fly?

I am going far away
  From the church-crowned hill:
Where the surf makes silence roar,
  Or the leaves lie still.
Follow, follow, follow me!
  Folk who know, as I,
That the Joy of Living calls
  When the wind goes by!

Find me by the waterside,
  Find me in the wood:
Take me as you find me, quick,
  If you find me good!

WOOD WANDERING

Fairy o' the bean bloom, Fairy o' the pea,
Fairy o' the pink hedgerose, show yourselves to me!
Green goblin o' the grass, limber lively lad,
Fife up to the wild feet that joy of you drives mad!

Down through the garden, all across the grove,
Fairy o' the pine-needles, whither shall I rove?
Neither hare nor deer am I, catamount nor snake;
Just a wild-wood-wanderer, — and what's the way
to take?

River at the foot of me, restless with his rocks,
Tickled by the white birch-tree's long green lady-
locks;
Cliff at my shoulder; forest at my back;
Meadow deep with daisies — what do I lack?

Nothing in the wide world save another face,
Save another cloven foot to tempt me to a race.
Fairy o' the Satyr-wind, be visible to me!
Never man nor woman sees the wilding world I see.

Fairy o' the frail fern, slender fairy girl,
Fairy o' the thistle-down, lead me all awhirl!
You of the water-fall, you of berry-brake,
You of the wet green moss, show the way to take!

What's the world but green and gold? What's love
but this —
Touching hands with tendriled vines, giving air
your kiss?
Who desires the ugly flesh, when his soul can run
Clean to the world's caress, splendid to the sun?

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Oh, lift your feet and follow away
To the bounds of the dark and the ends of the day!
Heigho! heigho! the Red Winds blow,
And a flame of a leaf down the road doth go:
A coal, a spark, that dances away,
Luring and leading you out of the day —
To the hill that's black and the sky that's red,
And a great white star set low overhead,
And a little white moon like a twisted thread
Athrill in the web of the well-wrought red.

Oh, lift your feet and follow away!
The Red Winds over your shoulder say:
"The Ends of the Earth lie far, lie far,
But close as the hill to the great white star;
The Ends of the Earth are fair to find,
So red with sunset and keen with wind;
And the spark of a leaf flies fast before,
Blowing across the world's wide floor,

Red, red, red, — oh, a sharp-blown fire!
And luring you on like your heart's desire!
Oh, lift your feet and follow away
To the bounds of the dark and the ends of the day:
Red, red, red, as a flame are they!"

Heigho! heigho! the Red Winds blow,
And the rush of a race to your feet doth go.
And over the hill and into the sky
You must follow and follow the chasing cry —
Follow the spark to the still white star,
To the Ends of the Earth, — oh far, so far!
At the bounds of the dark and the ends of the day!
Oh, lift your feet and follow away!

UP A HILL AND A HILL

Up a hill and a hill there's a sudden orchard-slope,
And a little tawny field in the sun;
There's a gray wall that coils like a twist of frayed-out rope,
And grasses nodding news one to one.

Up a hill and a hill there's a windy place to stand,
And between the apple-boughs to find the blue
Of the sleepy summer sea, past the cliffs of orange sand,
With the white charmèd ships sliding through.

Up a hill and a hill there's a little house as gray
As a stone that the glaciers scored and stained;
With a red rose by the door, and a tangled garden-way,
And a face at the window, checker-paned.

I could climb, I could climb, till the shoes fell off my feet,
Just to find that tawny field above the sea!
Up a hill and a hill, — oh, the honeysuckle's sweet!
And the eyes at the window watch for me!

RAINY WEATHER

Up comes 'Bouncing Bet' again,
Pink and lusty in the lane.
Tansy's odor keener is
Than all incense-mysteries.
Oh, the trees!
How they strain
In the driven windy rain!

All the marsh-grass bows its head,
All the tide-ways blur and spread,
And the bay
Is as gray
As the roof o' the miller's shed.

Up the hill I run, together
With the wet and windy weather.
Hair in eyes and dripping cheek,
(Oh, how cool and soft and sleek
Is the hand-touch of the rain!)
'Bet' and I bounce up the lane.

There the Dead Folk's decent rows
Flank me, and the church upstands
With its high gray shoulders, close
On the Dead Folks' silent lands.
— Oh, the trees,
How they strain!
Writhe and reach and fear the rain!
— 'Bet' and I bounce up the lane.

All the houses' eyes are shut.
Still are they as Dead Folk, but
Here a face and there a bloom
Nodding scarlet to the gloom
Say the Dead alone do lie
On the hill, against the sky.

Oh, the wind, the driven rain!
How the silver poplars strain!
How the world seems wide and low
As along the lane I blow,
All alone, and glad to be
For a little. Beat on me,
Wild wet weather! Strike me, wind!
Flare my brown cape out behind; —
Wingèd as a gull I fly
All alone beneath the sky.

Oh, the trees,
How they strain!
How they clamor and complain!
Reckless in the sea-tinged rain,
'Bet' and I bounce up the lane.

THE DEAD FOLK

THE Dead Folk live in decent rows;
  Their houses all are neat.
But through their doorways no one goes,
  With dull or dancing feet.

The Dead Folk are a harmless host.
  I have not ever seen
One single cautious, moon-gray ghost
  Slip o'er the shadowy green.

I doubt if they are ever glad
  Or sorry; though indeed
It often makes me still and sad
  To think they give no heed.

But in a few years more or less
  I shall not care at all
How many people peer and guess
  Above the churchyard wall.

And when they step about my house,
  And read my door-plate, — why,
I shall be quiet as a mouse,
  No matter how they cry.

Or if too long ago I went
  Down yonder for their tears,
I do not think I shall resent
  The silence of the years.

My body is a curious thing.
  My soul's not half so strange,
Who may go forth on gleaming wing,
  And take no touch of change.

But that my body should lie still,
  And never dance or run,
And never climb a crooked hill,
  And never see the sun, —

This is a strange, strange thing to me;
  And stranger yet it grows
Each time I stop awhile to see
  The Dead Folk's decent rows.

O STRONG DESIRES

O STRONG desires that hurt the heart
With useless strife of blunted wings,
I weary of your travailings. —
Why must you always surge and start
When I am nearest happiness?
Across the freedom of the sky
Like dazzling phantom gods you fly;
And seeing you, my joy is less.

When sometimes, by an April brook,
Beneath the birchen buds I kneel,
And, almost turned a Dryad, feel
The thrill of that green life which shook
Old woodlands that the Hellenes knew, —
When every breath is rare and good, —
There sweeps a shudder down the wood:
Wild-hearted wonders pierce me through.

Or when beside the hearth I lie
And listen to the liquid flame,
While One I love most speaks my name,
And in that peace my dreams all die, —

Then from the shadow-pools beyond
Our small red-circled joy, there leap
Tall shapes, fantastical as sleep,
To call us mortal, helpless, fond,
And blind my eyes with visions, vain,
Enormous, never known on earth:
A longing for immortal mirth
That mortal lips may never stain.

O strong desires! worthless wings!
Star-reachings, heaven-failings! why
Will you remind me I must die
To taste the utmost joyful things?

"TALL LILAC-TREE BESIDE MY DOOR"

Tall lilac-tree beside my door,
  How many Mays for me
Shall you stand murmuring once more
  In pale sweet ecstasy?

Deep meadows, flushed and daisy-drowned,
  How many Junes shall I
Among your flowery foam be found
  To hear your larks' long cry?

Cold moon beyond my maple trees,
  How often shall I know
Your frosty flashing mysteries
  Of silence and of snow?

And, little house of hearth that thrills,
  And chambers cool and gray,
How old an I shall sweep your sills
  And wind your clocks, some day?

— Oh, there are stars to-night to see:
They march, they burn, they sing.
How many nights of stars for me?
Of stars; of wondering? —

THE SILENT DAY

YESTERDAY I awoke
With a sunward spirit. A bubble
Of song from my soul outbroke.
I had never heard of trouble:

I had never heard of despair:
And the day was a curving ripple
Of windy musical air
And blossoms that toss and tipple.

Yesterday I awoke
With a singing splendor above me.
Even the stupidest folk
Turned in the street to love me!

Now to-day I am still
As a stone in a frosty river;
As a stone in the heart of a hill,
Under grasses that hiss and shiver.

No sun over my way
  Summons the world to see me.
This is the Silent Day
  When twinklings and tinklings flee me.

Courage, my heart, dead-dumb!
  Hold thyself hard from aching!
Silence is kind to come
  Lest the splendor strain thee to breaking!

SOUL VS. BODY

THOUGH Age is fifty years from me,
And Youth is close to me as breath,
My Soul too clearly can descry
Whither my Body journeyeth:
Whither my Body journeyeth:
A level land, a sober land,
Where I shall walk with stumbling feet
And listless eyes and groping hand:
Where I shall half forget my name,
And stand an hour long, seeking it:
Where I shall freeze, and o'er the flame
Half shuddering, half scorched shall sit.
Thither my Body journeyeth.
Blood, drop by drop, for toll I pay;
Though rich in that red coin to-night,
Youth wastes it bravely day by day.

But O my Soul, my ageless Soul,
Already winged for voyaging,
Why canst thou not fly far, to Youth,

When Body grows a dreary thing?
And as to-night thou mournest Age,
Although my Body laughs and leaps,
Why canst thou not laugh up to Heav'n
When Body aches, and numbs, and creeps?

My Soul! I trust my joy to thee;
More strong art thou than agèd Death!
With thee I fear not to descry
Whither my Body journeyeth.

I LAY BENEATH THE APPLE-TREE

I LAY beneath the apple-tree and heard
The leaves at endless whisper in the wind;
Also there passed above me many a bird,
Or perched and sang. Across my drowsy mind
Flew sun-and-shadow vagrancies, unshaped:
How somewhere, one might miss me, — how the wings
Of birds forevermore escaped, escaped,
The curious eye that watched their wanderings, —
How I was happier than once, and yet
I had done little service with my life, —
(For I might die, and all the world forget
I ever stretched my hands for sport or strife),
How one I knew, less old than I had died
A week ago.
Where then had journeyed she?
No more to hear the faint warm hours glide
With singing feet into Eternity;
To watch the apple-branches blow and flash,
— No more. — And then I hid my face and lay
Half-smothered, blind. Dull as a dead fire's ash
Became the sunny glamor of the day.

For I remembered those I loved, who passed
Beyond the sunlight on the eastern pane,
Beyond the snow and lightning; who at last
Ceased all their homely wonder, — "Would it rain,
Or shine to-day — " and laid their sorrows by,
Even old sorrows with old joys, and went
Whither? Ah, whither? Past the sun and sky?
Whither? Ah, whither? Proud-souled or forspent?

So underneath the apple-tree I lay,
Half in the body, half far-voyaging:
While any folk who walked the small foot-way
Had said I slept. Not so. On troubled wing
My soul fared out and beat against the blue,
And cried against the Gates of God for light.
But nothing answered, and my soul withdrew
Baffled and silent from her fruitless flight.

And I came home, along the small foot-way.
Trailing my feet in daisy-grass, I stooped
To pull the red wild strawberries, and play
With daisy-heads that bobbed and leaves that drooped,

And swift white wayward butterflies.
I came
Home to the little house below the hill,
— Where no one now looks out to call my name,
And yet, I think I sometimes hear them still. —

I have been very happy all this day,
O sun! O wind that blew the apple-tree!
And yet — you seem so far, so far away, —
And somehow, it is death stands close to me.

BEYOND RECALL

I CANNOT call you back again,
For you have journeyed far
Beyond the hosting of the rain
Or any circled star.
For you have journeyed suddenly
Beyond my highest hill.
I cannot call you back to me
Who am so earth-bound still.

In lilac-leaves and boughs of fir,
Low water-sounds and wind,
In wings that start and clouds that stir
Sure excellence I find:
In touch of hands and flash of eyes. —
But you, — oh, what of you?
Grown instantly so strange, so wise,
And so eternal too.

I cannot call you back, although
My loneliness may call.
What would you now of whirling snow
And shadows sunset-tall?

And I, — what would you now of me?
I cannot journey. I
Must wait till I too, suddenly,
Unlearn this earth, this sky.

THE DOORS

The doors open, the doors close.
Blindfold I stand, and hear them swing
In the wind of my bewildering.
The doors open, the doors close.

One tied a thick cloth over my face,
And led me into this alien place,
And left me alone, to grope and hear
The whispering winds of the world draw near,
And half, to hope; and half, to fear.

Do I dare to step? Do I dare to thrust
My hand in the dark that is thick as dust?
And what shall I find, if I enter where
The wind comes forth with a hand on my hair?
Do I dare? in the dark, — do I dare?

Which door leads to the face of the sun?
And which is the precipice-plunging one?
How shall I turn where the voice sings out
Like wind and water and sea-men's shout, —
Sings, and my heart leaps? Where? — I doubt.

I doubt. I am baffled. The darkness leans
Hard on my breast. My brain careens
Like a drunken galleon. The winds go by.
I hear the hinges that creak and cry,
  And one says "Live!" and one, "Thou shalt
    die!"

The doors open. The doors close.
  I reach my hand: it is filled with the dark.
  I cry, and the winds cry "Hark! — oh hark! — "
And the doors open, the doors close.

SONG — AFTER SORROW

Moonshine over the City;
  Moonshine over the Sea.
I have wandered farther than ever the Moon
  Since last She looked on me.

Little I knew how far, how far,
  How aching-far I should go,
With feet of a perilous falling star
  And hair that the Wind weighed low.

Moonshine over the City;
  Moonshine over the Sea:
Oh, I am weary as never the Moon
  With wandering curiously!

THE CITY'S CRY

The City cries to me all day
  And cries to me all night.
I do not put its voice away
  When I put out the light.

With stars and frost and windy things,
  Eternal things and still,
The City laughs and sobs and sings
  Across my window-sill.

O Sky of Stars, how wide you are!
How swept with light you lie!
Yet never any leaning star
Can heed the City's cry.

I lay awake when past the roofs
  The planets all were strange.
I heard the City's wheels and hoofs,
  The City's shift and change.

The planets all were greater far
  Than when I went to sleep;
And one long splendor of a star
  Across the dark did leap.

But oh, for all they were so proud,
  I heard the City cry,
And in my dreams I saw a crowd
  Of wan folk herded by

O Sky of Stars, though you are great,
Though dreams are heaven-high,
Monotonous and old as Fate
I hear the City cry!

BENEATH THE WALL

O LITTLE wind, O south wind,
O wind of pleasant feet,
Step quietly across the wall,
And bless this sorry street!

Above the shadowed, damp old wall
I see a piece of sky,
Most blue, — and there are cherry-trees,
White, white, — and swallows fly,

Black darting sharp-winged ships of air,
And there's the sun all day.
But here below, the street grinds on,
And it is March, not May.

O little wind, O south wind,
Come softly down to me!
A cherry petal's light as air;
Blow one across! For see,

The steaming streets, the shrieking wheels,
The bricks all foul with slime,
And not a blade of sudden grass
To tell the season's time.

And all the people's lips are blue
As on a sleety day,
For only up above the wall
Is sky and sun and May.

O little wind, O south wind,
O wind of pleasant feet,
Come down from that walled Paradise,
And bless this sodden street!

"OVER THE CITY, NIGHT"

I SHUT my door; I stand alone;
  My windy gaslight leaps and sings.
— Over the City weaves the Night
  Her web of secret things.
Over the City, all the streets
  Grow cavernous with dusk, or glare
White with a thousand lamps, while I
  Stand, letting down my hair.

Pale mirrored face, that comes to meet
  My face, with such unseeing eyes,
Art thou then *I*, who was so wild,
  And thought myself so wise?

— Over the City, face on face
  Stares at itself to-night, to find
Only a curious shell, with eyes
  Wide, meaningless, and blind.

I walked once in a graveyard place,
  Greeting the Dead Folk from the ground.
But I am lonelier far to-night
  Than with gray tombs around.

Life! Life! — the silence and the cry!
  The surge of seas without a chart;
More strange than Death. — Who ever chose
  His course? Born blind, to start
Adventuring? but now, behold,
  We must fare on, forever fare.
Over the City, Night. — And I
  Stand, letting down my hair.

TO OTHER SMALL VERSE-MAKERS

O, ALL ye little poet-folk,
Untried, enamored of a dream;
Ye, having breathed the altar-smoke,
And loved a shade, and chased a gleam: —

In face of all the woful things,
The long injustices of Life,
Believing somehow, something sings
Above the sordidness and strife: —

Ye, gallant grapplers with foul Fate, —
Let us sing high, then fight. Perchance
Our voice and valor shall be great
As Fate's unsinging circumstance.

O all ye little poet-folk,
Men say we are but fools of God, —
And yet, Gods breathe the incense-smoke;
And they are worms that seek the sod.

THE DREAM SELF

I SEE myself go up and down:
I chaffer in the market-town,
I linger on the willow-bridge,
And leap upon the mountain ridge.
I stretch myself to sleep at night
All drowsy-limbed and lapp'd in white:
At dawn I stand to greet the sun,
And softly cry to him. I run
Up hill and down: my hair flies free:
Flushed cheeks and panting heart of me!
In daisy fields I stumble; stoop
Where hot wild berries hide and droop;
I chase a bob-o'-link; I hark
To many a sad-glad meadow-lark;
In Wood of Firs I hold and hush
My breath, for oh, the thrush! the thrush!
And on the white roads do I pass
An old man here, and there a lass,
And sometimes shy-faced lads who stare
And blush, and look away. — O Care,

Thou hast not touched this Shadow-Me
Whom light of foot and heart I see!

For in what dream-roofed market-town
Does such an I go up and down?
And where in all the world the bridge,
The daisy field, the mountain ridge,
The Wood of Firs, the songs, the sky,
The lads and lasses loitering by?
Ah, where the little white-walled room
That bids me sleep from seed to bloom
Of flowery Day? And where, and where,
Light hands to smooth my flickering hair,
Light hands I love to hold me, eyes
To greet me home with laughter wise?

A Dream Self in a world of dreams:
A Shadow Self, among the gleams
The arc-lights cast. A foot unknown
By barren hall and sodden stone:
A face unstained by soot and smoke,
And all the million merciless folk.

O City, City, set me free
To live my lonely fantasy!

Your hand about my throat is hot.
I love you not; I love you not;
Your eyes are hard that stare at me.
O City, City, set me free!

— I see myself go to and fro.
The arc-lights quiver, row on row;
The street-signs wink and jeer with flame;
But nothing calls me by my name,
For nothing knows the names I bore
In those wild precious days of yore.

Someday, someday, — and though I die,
I shall come back, O sun! O sky!

SOULS

My Soul goes clad in gorgeous things,
Scarlet and gold and blue.
And at her shoulder sudden wings
Like long flames flicker through.

And she is swallow-fleet, and free
From mortal bonds and bars.
She laughs, because Eternity
Blossoms for her with stars!

— O folk who scorn my stiff gray gown,
My dull and foolish face,
Can ye not see my Soul flash down,
A singing flame through space?

And folk, whose earth-stained looks I hate,
Why may I not divine
Your Souls, that must be passionate,
Shining and swift, as mine?

ORIGINS

In many a graveyard by the sea
Lies ash of what now flames in me.
And down the aching wilderness
Blows dust whence got I throat or tress.
Above black tombs that cities choke
Dead hearts I echo drift like smoke.

My father and my mother, they
Could give me but a tithe of this:
This intricacy dark or gay
That is a Masque of mysteries:
This motley, sudden, awful thing,
Aladdin's lamp, Pandora's box:
Cramful of terrors wild to spring,
Of joy that glories, fear that mocks:
This me, that, walking down the street,
Half frightens me. Although I smile
And chat and bargain, I complete
Cycles of change in every mile!

My father and my mother told
Of certain folk, waste years away,
Who, sinful, beautiful, or bold
In war, in dreaming, in array
Of strength against their world, are still
Remembered. Ah, not all from them
Stretch down these subtle veins that thrill
Like fires that web an opal gem.

What gray-eyed Viking gave me sense
Of kinship with the drowning sea?
What great dame, steel-white, proud, intense,
Bestowed these cursèd nerves on me?

Was there a gipsy, long ago?
And whence my blunted finger-tips
That love the plain craft-labors so?
Did one limn pictures, one build ships?

Who blundered mothwise through the dark
Of smothering creeds, to find out God?
And oh, what dreamer like a lark
So uselessly the sun-path trod?

My father and my mother, they
Have given me so much of good,
Confounded am I to betray
Old angers, evil fires that brood
And blaze, or shameful cowardice.
Yet long ago, what choler flushed
A face now melted out like ice?
What anguish, demon-ready, rushed
Through stricken limbs? I look within,
Incredulous, distrait, to spy
An endless hungry Hell of sin.
I too had shouted "crucify!"

— Wind-ridden graves by winter sea,
What hold ye that may flame in me?
White dust across the wilderness,
What wit ye of my throat or tress?
Black-crusted tombs that cities choke,
Know I the hearts that stain your smoke?

Fathers and mothers, up the years
I call upon you. Touched with tears
I kneel before you. I repay
Upon the wind, your gifts. To-day

I own myself a patch-work thing,
A crazy, dust-heap scavenging
Of you, and you, and you, and you, —
Poor brave blurred skulls the sand slips through.

And yet — and yet —
I stand alone.
Now all the wide world seems my own.
Now time and space and God's own eyes
Draw down to me. I seem as wise
As Norns and Sybils. Mystery!
I nothing am save mimicry?
And yet, as proud, as fresh as sky,
Stand I, — another Strange New I!

THE NIGHTS

The Nights go by, the Nights go by,
Since the strong dark night that saw him die. —
He said not once "Farewell." He bowed
Never his forehead fair and proud.
He reached no hand in agony;
But he looked at me. He looked at me.

My soul and his in the strong dark night
Wing and wing took flight, took flight:
His before, and my soul behind,
They fled at the flashing skirts of the wind:
Stars they swept, and they looked on space
Where under the forked flames glowed God's face.
— Then deep they fell from the mystery,
As he looked at me, and looked at me.

The Nights like a flock of birds go by
Since the strong dark night that saw him die.
Over my head their wings I hear,
And their steady shadows hover and steer

Into my life and out again:
(Starlight and storm on the pelted pane,)
But never a night save that alone
Is all my own, is all my own.

He said not once "Farewell." His breath
Trembled no touch of time at Death.
He asked not, "Whither do I fare?"
For me no kiss, and for God no prayer.
But our souls went forth, and learned the way
That his must go ere dawn of day.

The Nights go by, the Nights go by,
Since the strong dark night that saw him die:
But never a night save that alone
Is all my own; is all my own.

FAITH

Oh, I am tired out to-day:
The whole world leans against my door:
Cities and centuries. I pray, —
For praying makes me brave once more.

— I should have lived long, long ago,
Before this age of steel and fire.
I am not strong enough to throw
A noose around my soul's desire
And strangle it, because it cries
To keep its old, unreasoned place
In some bright simple Paradise,
Before a God's too-human face.

I know that in this breathless fray
I am not fit to fight and cry.
My soul grows faint and far away
From blood and shouting, till I fly
A blinded coward, back, to hide
My face against the dim old knees
Of that too-human God, denied
By these quick crashing centuries.

And there I learn deep secret things:
Too frail for speech, too strong for doubt:
How through the dark of demon-wings
The same still face of God gleams out;
How through the deadly riotous roar
The voice of God speaks on. And then
I trust Him, as one might before
Faith grew too fond to comfort men.

— I should have lived far, far away
From this great age of grime and gold:
For still, I know He hears me pray, —
That close, too-human God of old!

GIPSY FEET

Oh, gipsy hearts are many enough, but gipsy feet
are few!
Many's the one that loves to dream night-long of
stars and dew:
Many's the one that loves the scent of wood-smoke
by the way,
And turns a leaping longing heart to every dawn of
day.

Gipsy hearts are many enough, but gipsy feet are
few. —
Ah, how ill it is to bide unloosed the long year
through!
Up and down the loud gray streets, stared at, star-
ing back,
Through tarnished trails of the staggering sun and
soot-fog ochre-black; —

Dressed in heavy and sober togs, eating of heavy
fare,
Hailed by only the screaming street, "Mind! step
lively there!"

Crook-backed over a dusty desk, — bothering to and fro
There in the dull and airless house, — ah, to cut and go! —

Up the hill-roads into the day! Over the sea-ward fells,
Watch the thistle-down dip, and hear the thin sheep's huddling bells;
Run like fire along the field, worship the heart of the wood,
Kneel by the spring that splits the rock, and find the white rain good.

— Oh, gipsy hearts are many enough, but gipsy feet are few;
And secret gods must we worship still, if we worship fire and dew.
For we must bend at the dusty desk, and over the counter lean, —
Toil and moil in the sun-starved house, though leaves blow red or green.

God, great God of the wind's caress, God of the sea's salute,
Why are we chained and muzzled and meshed more than our brother the brute?

Shall there be never a day that all of the gipsy
hearts may greet,
Laughing out at the lure of the sun for the lift of the
gipsy feet?

But oh, though that day is far to come, and the feet
forget to go free,
Pray God that the hearts may not forget the hurt
and the ecstasy!
Pray God that never the fret may fail when the
Spring comes over the year,
That never the thin gay autumn dawns may seem
less wild and dear.

For shall it not be the height of Heaven, wonderful,
swift, and sweet,
If into the paths of perilous death may wander the
gipsy feet?
May wander free, with the risk of the road, the road
that the glad Dead know,
Out where the fires of God flame high, and the winds
of God lean low!

SINGING

I DO not know why they should heed my singing.
Are they not deaf and blind with urgent Life?
And what am I, save one small lark, down-flinging
My sun-song on a battle's blood-red strife?

— To-day along the street I watched the City:
The faces, faces, blurred or keen or proud;
Barren with selfish shame or bright with pity;
Faces dumb-dreary or that cried aloud.

And there was nothing for my songs to show them
Save little idle loveliness, and faith
Too shy to reach the deep locked hearts below them,
Slight as a shadow, wavering as a wraith.

— Oh none the less I must be singing, singing!
Somehow I think I hold their hearts in trust:
Their secret sun-song, up the blue air flinging
Its challenge to the battle-dark and dust!

DAWN-DREAM

You dear angel! you wise angel! you angel with wonderful wings!
I heard you out in the great pine-tree, and you sang as a wild bird sings.
I heard you, up in the yellow dawn, before the frost is away.
O dear angel! O wise angel! lean down to my face, I pray!
Your hands would be cool and your cheeks would be cool; your wings would be cool as a rose:
If you would but bless me a blessing, small as the littlest wind that blows!

All night, all night, did I lie awake, and the moon looked in at me.
She was so terribly, mortally white, and the stars were as dumb as she.
Yet they told me I was a fool, a fool, for my dreams that never come true:
But oh, while I watched for the yellow dawn, out here in the pine sang you!

You dear angel! you wise angel! you angel with
wonderful wings!
Lean down for a minute, and kiss me — so — till
I *know* there are dream-sweet things!

HILL-FANTASY

Sitteth by the red cairn a brown One, a hoofed One,
High upon the mountain, where the grasses fail.
Where the ash-trees flourish far their blazing bunches
to the sun,
A brown One, a hoofed One, pipes against the gale.

. . . . . .

I was on the mountain, wandering, wandering;
No one but the pine trees and the white birch knew.
Over rocks I scrambled, looked up and saw that
Strange Thing,
Peakèd ears and sharp horns, pricked against the
blue.

Oh, and how he piped there! piped upon the high
reeds
Till the blue air crackled like a frost-film on a pool!
Oh, and how he spread himself, like a child whom no
one heeds,
Tumbled chuckling in the brook, all sleek and kind
and cool!

He had berries 'twixt his horns, crimson-red as cochineal.
Bobbing, wagging wantonly they tickled him, and oh,
How his deft lips puckered round the reed, and seemed to chase and steal
Sky-music, earth-music, tree-music low!

I said, "Good-day, Thou!" He said, "Good-day, Thou!"
Wiped his reed against the spotted doe-skin on his back.
He said, "Come up here, and I will teach thee piping now.
While the earth is singing so, for tunes we shall not lack."

Up scrambled I then, furry fingers helping me.
Up scrambled I. So we sat beside the cairn.
Broad into my face laughed that hornèd Thing so naughtily.
Oh, it was a rascal of a woodland Satyr's bairn!

"So blow, and so. Thou! Move thy fingers faster, look!
Move them like the little leaves and whirling midges. So!

Soon 'twill twist like tendrils and out-twinkle like
the lost brook.
Move thy fingers merrily, and blow! blow! blow!"

Brown One! Hoofèd One! beat the time to keep me
straight.
Kick it on the red stone, whistle in my ear.
Brush thy crimson berries in my face, then hold thy
breath, for — wait!
Joy comes bubbling to my lips. I pipe! oh, hear!

Blue sky, art glad of us? Green wood, art glad of us?
Old hard-heart mountain, dost thou hear me, how
I blow?
Far away the sea-isles swim in sun-haze luminous.
Each one has a color like the seven-splendored bow.

Wind, wind, wind, dost thou mind me how I pipe,
now?
Chipmunk chatt'ring in the beech, rabbit in the
brake?
Furry arm around my neck: "Oh, thou art a brave
one, Thou!"
Satyr, little satyr-friend, my heart with joy doth
ache!

Sky-music, earth-music, tree-music tremulous,
Water over steaming rocks, water in the shade,
Storm-tune and sun-tune, how they flock up unto us,
Sitting by the red cairn, gay and unafraid!

Brown One, hoofèd One, give me nimble hoofs, Thou!
Give me furry fingers and a secret furry tail!
Pleasant are thy smooth horns: if their like were on my brow
Might I not abide here, till the strong sun fail? —

Oh, the sorry brown eyes! Oh, the soft kind hand-touch,
Sudden brush of velvet ears across my wind-cool cheek!
"Play-mate, Pipe-mate, thou askest one good boon too much.
I could never find thee horns, though day-long I should seek.

"Yet, keep the pipe, Thou: I will cut another one.
Keep the pipe and play on it for all the world to hear.

Ah, but it was good once to sit together in the sun!
Though I have but half a soul, it finds thee very dear!

"Wise Thing, Mortal Thing, yet my half-soul fears thee!
Take the pipe and go thy ways, — quick now, for the sun
Reels across the hot west and stumbles dazzled to the sea.
Take the pipe, and oh — one kiss! then run! run! run!" —

Silence on the mountain. Lonely stands the high cairn.
All the leaves a-shivering, all the stones dead-gray.
O thou cold small pipe, which way is fled that Satyr's bairn?
I am lost and all alone, and down drops the day.

. . . . . .

I was on the mountain, wandering, wandering.
There I got this Pipe o' dreams. Strange, when I blow,
Something deep as human love starts a-crying, troubling.
Is it only sky-music, earth-music low?

WARNING

PAN's people on the mountain, pale Mermaids in the sea,
A Druid by the standing-stones, a Gipsy at the spring: —
Oh, queer indeed are all the folk who keep me company,
If you believe the tales I tell when I go romancing!

. . . . . .

A satyr on the mountain, a small brown satyr-bairn,
He piped to me and kissed me, beside the windy cairn.
But all I truly saw there was one flat-heeled Old Maid:
She had a most strong-minded look beneath a green sun-shade.

I was a gipsy, kneeling beside a wild camp-fire,
And down the red-leaf-road at dusk he came, my heart's desire!

His silver harness jingled; he sang; — but, bless
you, then
I just was minding bacon for three hungry picnic-
men!

Once Gabriel and Michael stood near me, side by
side.
Their hair was flame, their eyes were flame, their
whispering wings swept wide.
Great Gabriel and Michael! They were not there,
you know,
But I was bored, quite frankly bored, the Rector
rambled so.

. . . . . .

So, when you read my verses, O Anyone Who
Might,
You must not mind stray angels or a sudden furry
faun.
They are my dear Dream-people: they are my
heart's delight:
But still I turn the bacon-fork, or sit in church and
yawn!

MY HOUSE

You'll follow the car-track down the hill,
And cross the bridge by the dead-faced mill —
(There's a row of poplars that shiver there,
And thin bright water comes over the weir,)
Then presently, turn to the left a bit,
And there by the road my house will sit.

Oh, such a plain white Puritan house!
Proper as paint, and mild as a mouse;
Good green shutters and lilac-trees,
Hollyhocks nodding, and, if you please,
A walk of flag-stones with grass between,
And lichen ledges all mouldy green.

Tinkle my bell, (there's a knocker, you'll see.
But I wouldn't hear it thumping, maybe,
Up in the garret rafters, or out
In the kitchen, taking my turn about
With the dishes,) tinkle, and turn and look
At my hills, past the strawberry fields and the brook

And the daisy meadow and dim beech wood,
At my hills, — wide billows of wonder, good
As a play for watching! You never know
The next wise act in their all-day-show;
Though you'd hardly guess it, they crouch so still,
Great green hill over great green hill,
With never a comment on Life or Death,
Drawing their own slow cycles of breath.

And long, oh, ever so long before
You're done with looking, I'll come to the door,
Covered with big blue apron and all,
Unless I'm quite sure it's a Proper call;
Decide if I like your looks, and say,
(If I do) "Come in!" and show you the way
To the room where the books live, crowded high
To the very top of their ceiling-sky,
Railing or preaching, inside, at us,
But seeming most silent and decorous.

I hope, if I like you, the weather'll be cold.
We'll blow up the fire on the hearth, and hold
Our hands out to it, and somehow then
We needn't chatter so much as when

We sit up stiff in my grandmother's chairs,
And talk of the weather.
How fire-shine scares
The smallness from us, and makes us say
Big slow things that are better than gay!

— So, maybe, we'll half be friends before
You stand again in the sunny door,
Tread again down the flag-stones, greet
My waiting hills, and go up the street,
Willing, I hope, to come back again
To my house, so Puritan white and plain;
Willing, I hope, to come back to see
My hills and my hollyhocks and Me!

. . . . . .

The architect showed me the plans to-day,
But he's mortal slow to get under way!
If my cellar is dug before frost gets in,
And the men don't strike, if they once begin, —
If my poems sell, (but how can they all?)
There's the ghost of a chance that the day you call,
(Follow the car-track down the hill,
And cross the bridge by the poplar-mill,)
There, as I said, my house will sit,
Off to the side of the road a bit.

And oh, though there aren't any hollyhocks,
And my house still looks like a blank white box,
And you can't find the flag-stones and lilac-trees,
You mustn't be stiffish and solemn, please!
You must take my hills and my house and me
For a promise of all that we want to be.

For I rather think, if I choose it so,
My house, and those hollyhocks, will grow —
Not till I'm spent and old, maybe,
But surely someday, simple and free;
Good at welcomes, and glad to greet
Over the flag-stones, wishful feet: —
And my hills, and my hearth, and even I
Can make you happier, bye and bye!

FREE

THE spring winds sweep my garden-wall;
The tall ships take the sea.
I will be happy with them all,
For now my heart is free.

The swift years fly before my face
Like swallows sharp and blue.
From out the dark of Time and Space
They never bring me You.

And who You are I do not know
I hardly long to see
A face so dim, and feet so slow
To cross the world to me.

If You had loved me, there was time
To find me out: but now
I have more joy of wind or rhyme
Than dream-hands on my brow.

O winds across my garden-wall!
O ships upon the sea!
Your kin am I: no more I call
The wraith of Love to me!

A SEA-SPELL

The bay is bluer than all the sky;
The sky is bluer than sapphire-stone;
The wind and the wave, the wave and the wind,
Beat and dazzle me glad and blind,
  Over the marshes blown.

Once I was a plover who ran, who ran,
A crying shadow along the foam.
Once I was a gull in the swing of the spray.
Over green shallows I hung all day,
  Till sunset carried me home.

Once I was a ship with glorious sails
That leapt to the love of the wind.
Up over the edge of the world I fled,
Sun-followed and fleet-foam-heralded: —
  The hidden tides knew my mind.

But now I am only a girl who runs,
A laughing pagan with tangled hair.
Plover and gull and ship was I, —
Perchance when my body comes to die
  My soul shall again fly fair?

NOCTURNE — (FOR MUSIC)

Far, — far, — oh, far, —
The sweet sea-silence lies.
Past the surfy bar
The dark tide dreams and sighs. —

Night, — trembling night, —
And only I to see
Heaven's reeling white
Star-haunted mystery. —

Far, — far, — oh, far, —
The strong sea-silence broods
— Hush, oh falling star!
Hurt not Heav'n's solitudes!

HEART O' THE WOOD

I WENT up on foxes' feet:
  I went up on thrushes' wings.
O Thou Heart o' the Wood, thou sweet
  Company of Silent Things!

. . . . . .

No one said me nay. I passed
  Wingwise up the quiet tracks
Where the tall dead pine-trees cast
  Shadows on each others' backs.
They were rich with bronze and tall;
  They were warm and incense-rare;
And the Sun went through them all
  As a king goes up a stair.
Not a squirrel, not a bird,
  Not a heavy human stir.
All the wind I ever heard
  Was an idle loiterer.
At the top I stood agaze
  Where the forest fell apart,
Caught the blue of gleaming bays,
  Searched the faint horizon's heart;

Stared down vistas green and gold:
  Fairy ferns in companies,
Beech leaves tossing manifold
  As the tides of tropic seas: —
Sat one moment with the Sun,
  Loosed his hand at last and leapt,
Like a diver at a run,
  Where the green leaf-water swept.
Ah, it swirled above my head!
  Far and cool the sunshine grew,
And my feet that slipped and fled
  Down the leafy whirl-pool drew.
Drowned in leaves — in leaves I swung.
  Fathoms deep I trod the green
Trembling silence; or I hung
  Swaying o'er the depth serene.
But my breath was light and free,
  And my eyes were wide, for oh,
Wonder — Wonder — sang to me
  From the silence green and low!

. . . . . .

I came down, nor felt my feet:
  I came down, nor needed wings.
O Thou Heart o' the Wood, thou sweet
  Company of Silent Things!

WATER FANTASY

O BROWN brook, O blithe brook, what will you say
to me
If I take off my heavy shoon and wade you child-
ishly?

O take them off, and come to me.
You shall not fall. Step merrily!

But, cool brook, but, quick brook, and what if I
should float
White-bodied in your pleasant pool, your bubbles
at my throat?

If you are but a mortal maid,
Then I shall make you half afraid.
The water shall be dim and deep,
And silver fish shall lunge and leap
About you, coward mortal thing.
But if you come desiring

To win once more your naiadhood,
How you shall laugh and find me good —
My golden surfaces, my glooms,
My secret grottoes' dripping rooms,
My depths of warm wet emerald,
My mosses floating fold on fold!
And where I take the rocky leap
Like wild white water shall you sweep;
Like wild white water shall you cry,
Trembling and turning to the sky,
While all the thousand-fringèd trees
Glimmer and glisten through the breeze.
I bid you come! Too long, too long,
You have forgot my undersong.
And this perchance you never knew:
E'en I, the brook, have need of you.
My naiads faded long ago, —
My little nymphs, that to and fro
Within my waters sunnily
Made small white flames of tinkling glee.
I have been lonesome, lonesome; yea,
E'en I, the brook, until this day.
Cast off your shoon; ah, come to me,
And I will love you lingeringly!

O wild brook, O wise brook, I cannot come, alas!
I am but mortal as the leaves that flicker, float, and pass.
My body is not used to you; my breath is fluttering sore;
You clasp me round too icily. Ah, let me go once more!
Would God I were a naiad-thing whereon Pan's music blew;
But woe is me! you pagan brook, I cannot stay with you!

THE GLAD DAY

I HAVE not thought of sorrow
The whole day long, nor now.
I wandered out, and oh, what winds
Laid kisses on my brow!

And all the world was kind to me:
Each spear of grass was gay;
The brown brooks had a mind to me,
And sang me on my way.

I conquered many a climbing road,
And always at the crest
The winds of all the world abode,
And shadows stopped to rest.

The hills like lazing gods of eld
With sleepy shoulders lay,
And all the soaring vault upheld
Of high blue heavenly day.

Far, far below the village spire
Pricked sharply to the sky.
"Strong pagan hills of my desire!
Frail house of God!" thought I.

Far, far below the river crept;
The willow leaves made stir
Of blowing silver, touched and swept
By wind, wild lute-player.

(The river-wind a minstrel is,
A minstrel deft and blind.
The willows know his fingers' kiss
As strings the player's mind.)

The sweet shorn fields, the fairy fern,
The roadside's gipsy bloom,
Young goldenrod, — oh, every turn
Was blithe with green and gloom!

I did not meet a single face
That would not smile at me.
Perhaps the sun's vast golden grace
Set love and laughter free.

The gravestones by the poplar tree
Full carelessly I passed.
I thought that Death himself must see
How sweet was Life, at last.

And I came home at evening time,
But still my heart doth sing, —
So have I wrought this wavering rhyme
For my remembering.

I have not thought of sorrow
The whole day long, nor now.
Good-night, fair world! and oh, what stars
Weave splendor round my brow!

EARTH-BOUND

I CANNOT fly to Paradise:
  I cannot leave at all
The homely heaven-path that lies
  Hard by my own house-wall.

O stars and suns that wait on God,
  I know you not. I know
That I am kin of leaf and sod,
  Of rain, white frost, and snow.

O dreams that pierce the heart of life,
  I feel you flashing by,
But may not watch the immortal strife
  Ye wage, too bright to die.

My own dear dreams are small and still:
  How some one likes me; how
It was a joy to climb the hill
  Where west-wind stroked my brow;

How I shall make a dress to-day
  Of merry woodland green,
That to Myself Myself may say
  "To Fairyland you've been!"

How I am glad the seasons change;
  More glad my friends change not:
How even troubles sharp and strange
  I somehow have forgot.

I cannot fly to Paradise:
  My earth-stained wings are slow.
Not being wonderful or wise
  The earth-joy keeps me low.

Yet to the secret Hand of God
  I hold, nor feel afraid.
He knows me Soul; He knows me sod;
  For both He dreamed and made!

THE SECRET THING

I SOUGHT to sing the secret of my heart;
But it escaped me like a wild-winged bird,
And to the lonely Heavens did depart
Until a faint lost note was all I heard.
  And no one else on all the earth could hear
  What I had deemed so marvelously clear.

I sought to tell the secret of my heart,
Whispering low, to one who loved me well.
But like a breath of dawn I felt it start
And pass before one precious symbol fell.
  And she I loved so only looked at me.
  "What fragrant wind was that? Oh, sweet!"
    said she.

So I shall keep it hid eternally.
It is so filmy, exquisite, and wild:
And yet so bright and eloquent and free.
Full many a barren day it has beguiled.
  But if none else its loveliness may see
  Think not I play the miser willingly!

"OH NEVER SHUT YOUR DOOR ON ME"

Oh never shut your door on me
  Because your house will make me sad.
I dance enough: I always see
  Enough sweet things to keep me glad.

And if you shut your door and say
  "My house is dark and dull for you:
Run far, run far, and love your day,
  Your sun and wind and flowery dew,

"I must not make you sad," — Ah so
  I shall be saddest and most still,
And never spread my wings to blow
  Across the sunny windswept hill:

I shall but stand outside your door
  And cry, and trouble you, till you
Must let me in to you once more,
  Or hear me cry, the whole day through.

What do I care how dark your hall
With lonely strange unlonged-for night?
How cold your hearth, how fast to fall
The tears you hid from stark day-light?

Perhaps the fire is lit, for me!
Perhaps the chambers shine and sing.
You do not know! Your agony
To me may be a brave bright thing!

And even if I cannot make
The cold house warm and happy, yet
Two hearts are swifter not to ache:
Two heads are swifter to forget.

And if you shut your door on me
Too long, until, forspent, I go
Away, and leave you utterly, —
Oh, I could never shine and blow!

YEARS

In the night I awake, when the moon is dead,
When the gloomy streets are untraverséd:
When the silence sings, and the night-lamp's gleam
Flickers like breath of a dying dream.

I turn on my face, I cover my ears,
But I cannot escape the tramp of the Years:
The Years I have known, the Years I must know,
And the Years where my body never may go.

In the night I awake, when the moon is dead.
My dreams like the light are all scatteréd.
I turn on my face, I cover my ears,
But they march, they march, the Hosts of the Years.

They march to the brink of a strange bright sea,
And fall in the tides of Eternity. —
Like a ghost-ridden child, I cover my ears,
But I hear the death of the strong-shod Years.

TO LONELY YOUTH

So, lean your head against my knee,
And cry, and tell it all to me.

You need not play-act now, poor child;
You of the windy heart and wild,
Whom all the boys and girls pass by
Because you are not like them.
Cry!
Cry till the laughter flickers through,
Bright from the good brave pride in you,
Bidding you know how young you are,
Happy with sunbeams or a star,
Or sea-storms or a butterfly.
You, whom the boys and girls pass by
Have merrier thoughts each dawn of day
Than in a year of dancing, they!

And yet, you envy them. Ah, there!
Toss back your tangle-top, and stare
Straight in my eyes, you child.
How deep
The full-grown passionate wonders sleep!

You cannot guess how rich you are,
Lover of silence and a star: —
Longing, (great eyes and gleaming curls)
Just to be like all other girls;
Just to be gay, and quick, and wear
The same wide ribbons in your hair,
To talk the same sharp chatter, change
The same small jokes.
While you — can range
The Silver Mountains of the Moon
In curly-footed elfin shoon;
And feel the Spirits of the Air
Whisper across that tumbled hair;
Can hear, not very far away,
True Joy and Sorrow, calling, "Lay
Your childhood by! We come to meet
Full soon, the twinkle of your feet;
And we shall make you wise, and strong,
And gay as gods, not girls, ere long!"

Oh, lean your head against my knee,
And listen, breathing quietly.

For all the ribbons and the curls,
You are not like those other girls. —

Dear heart, you cannot laugh as they,
Who never know what makes you gay:
You must be lonely, often; yes,
And learn to love your loneliness.

Yes, lonely, — wistful eyes!
O child,
Vexed by the windy heart and wild,
Youth hurts you, and must hurt you. Yet
Hold to your dreams! nor once forget
They shall be utter Youth for you
When others' dancing-days are through.
Hold to your dreams!
What if, to-night,
You seemed so stupid, and the light
Young laughter lashed you? — some day, sweet,
Your turn shall come! your turn, to greet
High Friends, deep Love: no puppet-play,
But Love's last pain and pride, some day.
And nights like this, Tired Heart, will seem
The least queer shadow of a dream!

And yet (great eyes and tear-wet curls)
You would be like those other girls!
So be it! Run! Blow out the light.
But — no more tears! — You child, good-night!

I WENT TO SEEK HER

I WENT to seek her, for I love her.
I went to seek her; she was gone.
Sunshine, seeing all things, canst discover
Which of all the roads she wanders on?

Wind, knowing wild earth's cracks and crannies,
Hast brushed her temples and her hair?
In a hid place, where no beast nor man is, —
Where she wanders lonely, yet so fair?

Green is the mountain and the meadow:
Silver-streaked the whispering willow-tree:
River sharp with sun or soft with shadow:
Clouds like to lily-blooms, — but she? —

Ah, I will seek her, for I love her!
I will follow, over hill and sea!
Flying air-folk, help me to discover
Whither like a wild bird wanders she!

THE RED ROAD

The wild blood of the gipsy folk
  Is staining all the wood,
The hazes like their camp-fires smoke, —
  Alas, wild brotherhood!
  Oh, sweet are berries on the thorn
  And apples stol'n by night,
  For we of gipsy folk were born,
  To blink by the red fire-light.
To blink by the red fire-light, oh child,
  To stare at the naked stars.
What wonder that your heart is wild,
  And walls seem prison-bars?

And now the roads are free and clean,
  And now the wind is cold;
The crimson bleeds across the green,
  The green is rich with gold.
  The river hisses at the race,
  The yellow leaves float fast;
  But we are wanting from our place,
  Though the gipsy winds blow past.

Though the gipsy winds blow high, oh child!
Though the gipsy moon leans low.
Alas that hearts so keen and wild
May not rise up and go!

Oh, I am old and I must die,
But once my hair was thick,
And full of gipsy blood was I —
The rich, the bold, the quick.
The Little Road across the Hill,
The Great Road to the Sea,
The Willow Paths, they call me still,
And the Red Road sings to me.
The Red Road sings to me, oh child,
Where the leaves like fire-flames blow.
Oh, heart of my young heart, born wild,
Rise up, and run, and go!

NOT FOR YOUR SAKES

Not for your sakes; — although I can but see
How glad you are to greet my joy, my youth,
(For you remember suddenly in me
Your May-days) — ah, but I must tell the truth:
Not all to help your groping loneliness,
Nor yet because I love you (though I do)
To-day I kneel beside you, swift to press
Your hands in mine, with laughter; not for you,
But for myself.
When I shall sometime grow
A little old, a little dim and strange,
When fine gray veils across my brightness blow,
And mirrors whisper, "Look! you change. You change!"
When somehow friends no more beset me; dreams
Are dumb at night, and lame at dawn of day;
When stealthy as a star the Glory seems
To fold itself in fog and tread away; —

Then, when I think, "My turn at last is come.
Time to put by the wind and sun and sea:
Time to begin the darkening path-way home,
Where my flown Youth, bright-winged, awaiteth me:
Time to slip back, slip back, and be at rest," —
Ah then, to know my youth uncursed, unmarred
By coldness and bright cruelty, the zest
Of feet that dance on hearts: — to take the hard
Low shadowed road with no vain bitterness,
No blind self-hatred, but as one who goes
Safe through the lonely places, lanternless,
Yet trusting that the road is one he knows; —
Oh, for myself, myself, I come to you,
Frail blue-veined hands, dulled eyes, and questioning ears,
Loving you truly, as I can but do,
But seeing half *myself* through these my tears!

COMRADES

You need not say one word to me, as up the hill we go,
(Night-time, white-time, all in the whispering snow)
You need not say one word to me, although the whispering trees
Seem strange and old as pagan priests in swaying mysteries.

You need not think one thought of me, as up the trail we go,
(Hill-trail, still-trail, all in the hiding snow;)
You need not think one thought of me, although a hare runs by,
And off behind the tumbled cairn we hear a red fox cry.

Oh, good and rare it is to feel, as through the night we go,
(Wild-wise, child-wise, all in the secret snow,)
That we are free of heart and foot as hare and fox are free,
And yet that I am glad of you, and you are glad of me!

SILENCE

In the old days, when first I knew you, we
Were not afraid of Silence. We could stand
Whole growing-spaces, staring splendidly
Across the moon-white palpitating land,
And turn, and climb again the mountain-trail
With but a sigh of joy. Or we could sit
Half-hours by the wood-fire, while the frail
Fierce sparks whirled starwards from the heart of it.
Our thoughts, it seemed, their quiet distance kept.
Their high-roads never meeting, side by side,
Moonward and starward, innocent they swept:
And we were glad and silent, and the wide
Still world seemed all our play-ground, for we knew
That we could dream together, I and you.

But now, we are afraid of Silence. We
Dare not a moment let her in to us,
Lest she betray us, blankly, utterly.
She who was once so kind, now perilous

As some sly enemy, must stand apart. —
The shuttle of our words shoots to and fro
In worthless webs; while constantly my heart
Yearns back to Silence, begging her to show
The old clear look, hushed lips, free eyes. Alas!
Her treacherous throbbing presence we must flee:
Must blur the precious moments, till they pass
To leave me hurt by you. (And you by me?)
O bitter broken day when first we knew
We dared not dream together, I and you!

AFTER COPYING GOODLY POETRY

O WORDS, strong lovely words, would ye were mine,
And not another's! I am covetous
Of your slow cadences and flight divine.
Would that my verses cried and murmured thus!

For as my hand moved over you, I knew
How beautiful you were. I loved you well,
As the lips love rose-petals cold with dew,
As fingers love the flutings of a shell, —

And as the heart loves one so very fair
She must be always distant, like the moon.
So did I love you, delicate verses, rare
And wondrous with the dawn-wind's throbbing tune.

O words, strong lovely words! would ye were mine!
— I know I am too vainly covetous;
For if I die without one singing sign,
What matters it while ye can echo thus?

And yet my heart is faint and hot in me.
As childless wives for stranger-babies pine,
My heart cries out, oh, very hungrily,
Words, words, strong lovely words, would ye were
mine!

THE HERMIT ON THE DUNES

I

Far away to the South
Where the sea-hill heaps
A gray gull wanders,
A gray sail sweeps.

Far away to the South
Where the sky leans low
My gray thoughts journey,
My gray dreams blow.

In my house by the dunes
I have Silence for wife,
Though the long shore shudders
With the surf's drawn strife.

Oh, she broods by my hearth
And she bends to my bed.
She is strange as the old Norns
And dumb as the dead.

Far away to the South
Where the sea heaps high
The gulls fade ever,
The sails all die, —
— Far away to the South —

II

Over the moors, the sweet scorched moors,
(Fern and bay and a blackberry brake,)
The road to the harbor-town allures,
Winding away like a warm brown snake.
Quivering up in the hot blue light
The village spires stand sharp and white:
The wind-mill twinkles; the harbor shines
Over the tops of the dwarfed dune-pines;
And the peak of a sloop slips past the bar,
Gleaming and still as a sea-bound star.

O huddled house on the drifted dune,
Have you locked in your heart my right to June?
Will you hold me here with my head in my hands,
Staring across the blank bright sands,
Out to sea, and always to sea,
Where only the gulls' wings beckon me?

I am hungry for faces, thirsty for words;
I am troubled with water and weary of birds:
Shall I go, past the clattering gray-winged mill,
Down the steep lane over the hill?
Where the poplar trees in the church-yard quake,
And the bees in the roses rumble and shake,
Where the sunburned children dance laughing
down
To the long wet wharves at the back of the town?

— But one gray house in the lane is blind.
Its silver poplars know well the wind:
Its damask roses hang red, hang deep,
But the house is shuttered and fast asleep.

I will not go down the crooked lane.
I think it is better to wait.
To wait?
Shall I then turn to a boy again,
Or my mother stand by the swinging gate?

— Over the moors, the sweet scorched moors,
(Blackbird, swallow, and butterfly,)
The road to the harbor-town allures,
But why should I follow it? Ah, why?

III

Seven gulls sit screaming high
On her prow that cut the sky;
And her name is rubbed away
By the wind-and-water play;
While the silent ceaseless sands
Hide her quick keel in their hands.

All her goodly timbers gape,
Hurt and humbled out of shape,
And the tides sweep green and cold
Through her hollow-hearted hold.

O tall ship! tall ship! I too
Cast aground grow old like you.
Does your heart beat? Have you breath
Underneath those bones of death?
Do you dream? do you awake
Shuddering at dim day-break,
Only to fall back again
To the old-time shift of pain:
Tide, and sun, and wind, and rain?

O tall ship! tall ship! I too
Once was high-sea-bold as you!

IV

I watched the endless gull-wings fade,
I dreamed my old dim endless things:
Looked up, and saw a gold-haired maid
Against the sea, with arms like wings

Spreading her green scarf to the wind,
Leaning and laughing to the sun. —
Ah me! her brightness made me blind,
Till I could hardly see her run

White-footed down the thin white foam,
Slim-bodied up the slippery sands;
Like some wild sea-maid, dancing home
With shining feet and flickering hands.

— I crouched beneath the dune. She passed;
Her song, sea-smothered, and her gleams
Fading along the surf at last
Like all the sun that haunts my dreams.

— The brave day fades, too blue, too fair.
Sunset and silence and the night. —
O golden head and wild heart, where
Are you some glad home's lasting light?

V

Low water — low water — silence on the sea, —
Across the moors the Sunday bells ring warm and drowsily.

Low water — low water — dim and smooth and pale.
Across the moors the windmill waves an idle Sabbath sail.

Low water — low water — plover peeping faint, —
Across the moors the church-doors swing for sinner and for saint.

Low water — low water — silence on the sea, —
Across the moors they pray to God, while here He breathes on me!

VI

Suddenly I awoke. The wind was awake before.
He tramped on the desolate dunes; he battered and beat on my door.
And the sea rose up to his shout; and mad, stark mad in the night,
Plunging and grappling and great they staggered and swung to their fight.

I leaned out into the dark, to the stinging smothering wrack;
But my eyes were blinder than Fear: I was beaten and buffetted back.
And they struggled and stumbled and groaned in the dark of the dunes till day,
Till the wind sank down in the sand, and the sea crept wounded away.

Then I slept, but my dreams went wild; for I fought with Myself, and failed;
And I knew that the stars were ashamed, and the sea-gulls jeered me and railed,
Till I rose with a terrible cry, and flung off the blood from my face, —
"Oh bitter and barren Self! Give place to my soul! give place!"
And a God flashed out of a cloud, and his eyes were like strong kind flame,
But I woke as he swept me a sword, and cheered me, and cried my name, —
And I thought that a thousand years had been tossed to Eternity,
Since suddenly I awoke, and the wind cried out, and the sea.

VII

I shall not lie in any grave
Beneath a toppling lichened stone.
When I grow weariest, the wave
And turning tide shall have their own.

I cannot wait for folk to find
The shattered burned-out wreck of me:
To trouble it with being kind
And mocking its mortality,

And stealing from my helpless hold
The lonely death that I have earned:
To dare the untried utmost, bold
With the sea-splendor I have learned.

I shall not wait too long, at last;
But as, so often, I have leapt
Light-limbed across the surf, and cast
My sorrows from me as I swept

Out — out — across the clean wild foam, —
So then, I shall be sure and free.
Only, I need not think of home,
Nor fear the hunger of the sea.

I know it cannot be too strange
To die, as I have lived, alone.
— But ah, my Soul! where wilt thou range?
What tide can claim thee for its own? —

THE SONGS OF CONN THE FOOL

I

I WILL go up the mountain after the Moon:
She is caught in a dead fir-tree.
Like a great pale apple of silver and pearl,
Like a great pale apple is she.

I will leap and will catch her with quick cold hands
And carry her home in my sack.
I will set her down safe on the oaken bench
That stands at the chimney-back.

And then I will sit by the fire all night,
And sit by the fire all day.
I will gnaw at the Moon to my heart's delight
Till I gnaw her slowly away.

And while I grow mad with the Moon's cold taste
The World will beat at my door,
Crying "Come out!" and crying "Make haste,
And give us the Moon once more!"

But I shall not answer them ever at all.
I shall laugh, as I count and hide
The great black beautiful Seeds of the Moon
In a flower-pot deep and wide.

Then I shall lie down and go fast asleep,
Drunken with flame and aswoon.
But the seeds will sprout and the seeds will leap,
The subtle swift seeds of the Moon.

And some day, all of the World that cries
And beats at my door shall see
A thousand moon-leaves spring from my thatch
On a wonderful white Moon-tree!

Then each shall have Moons to his heart's desire:
Apples of silver and pearl;
Apples of orange and copper fire
Setting his five wits aswirl!

And then they will thank me, who mock me now,
"Wanting the Moon is he," —
Oh, I'm off to the mountain after the Moon,
Ere she falls from the dead fir-tree!

II

You had better be careful and make the door faster
to-night.
I know there are Those round the house, that are
hungry for good fire-light.
If you open the door, they will thrust their long feet
in the crack,
And leap on the threshold, and drive you all shiver-
ing back!

And they'll tease you with curly queer tongues in
your faces like flame,
With winking their round eyes and snapping their
fingers and mincing your name.
Till you cover your ears and your eyes and start
praying, while They
With the cakes from the cup-board, the ale from the
jug, do away.

And One will lie down in your bed, and his feet will
be black
With the bad lasting mud of the bogs and the dark
mountain-track;

And One will go worry the poor simple pigs in the sty,
In a shape like a pig, silver-skinned, with an emerald eye.

Oh, I tell you, it's best to be careful and bar the door faster this night!
They are dancing out there in the dark, but they hunger for good fire-light.
It's a wonder, now, you to be sitting so pleasant and still.
Don't you hear Them there, scuffling and scrambling across the door-sill?

III

There came two ravens to carry me away,
And they flew, and they flew, all the livelong day.

One took me by the head, and one by the feet,
Like a strange stupid corpse that is borne down the street.
One tickled all my face with the brushing of his wings,
While my hair blew whistling back like a hundred wild harp-strings.

The other pecked and snatched at my foot all the day
As they carried me away, and carried me away.

They carried me across from the shore to the sea,
And that was a trouble and a fear to me.
They carried me across from the sea to the shore,
And my bones they were weary and my soul it was sore.
They carried me across from the day to the night,
And it seemed wrong to me when I could not see the light.
They carried me across from the night to the day,
But I had forgotten how to greet the sun and pray.

They lit upon a pine-tree, and the tree it was high,
On a bare bald mountain that wore against the sky.
They tangled up my feet in the needles of the pine,
And they gave me cones for bread and the bitter pitch for wine.
And they swung me up and down till I cracked the brittle sky,
But I had forgotten how to shudder or to cry.

The sun came so close that he troubled all my head.
He was like a smelting-furnace, very hot, very red.
The stars came so close that I longed to snatch them down.
They were sharp shining ones, like king's jewels in a crown.

And the two ravens sat in the dark pine-tree,
And they jeered and they jibed and they screamed loud at me.
The pine-pitch smeared my mouth and the cones I could not eat,
And the needles pricked and wove round my head and my feet.
And I had forgotten how to sing or to pray;
And I had forgotten if it were night or day.

And there I might have stayed till it came my time to die,
But an Angel out of Heaven passed flying quickly by.
He blew upon my feet, and he blew upon my head,
And "Wherefore lie you here?" were the words that he said.

Then I fell a thousand fathoms, and I flew a thousand miles,
And I feared as I flew for the two ravens' wiles.
But the Angel went behind, like a goodly wind and wise,
And he carried me across, as a homeward swallow flies.

Oh, he carried me across from the night to the day,
And then I remembered how to greet the sun and pray.
He carried me across from the sea to the shore,
And when I saw the grass, I blessed him even more.
He carried me across, and he left me, and he went
Like a fog that dissolves, like a wind that is spent.

Then I walked upon my feet to my own cabin-door,
And there was my good hound lying on the floor;
But I heard the hearth-fire sing and the clock tick on the shelf
Before I remembered that I was myself!

And I ate a crumb of bread, and I drank a sup of wine:
It was sweeter than the cones and the evil pitch of pine:

And I fell upon my knees and began to sing and pray,
For I thought that it was best to be thanking God
that day.
(Oh, there came two ravens to carry me away!)

IV

You must do nothing false
Or cruel-lipped or low;
For I am Conn the Fool,
And Conn the Fool will know.

I went by the door
When Patrick Joyce looked out.
He did not wish for me
Or anyone about.

He thought I did not see
The fat bag in his hand.
But Conn heard clinking gold
And Conn could understand.

I went by the door
Where Michael Kane lay dead.
I saw his Mary tie
A red shawl round her head:

I saw a dark man lean
Against her garden-wall.
They did not know that Conn
Walked by at late dusk-fall.

You must not scold or lie,
Or hate or steal or kill,
For I shall tell the wind
That leaps along the hill,

And he will tell the stars
That sing and never lie:
And they will shout your sin
In God's face, bye and bye.

And God will not forget
For all He loves you so.
He made me Conn the Fool,
And bade me always know!

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